Reviewer's report

Title: An Output Evaluation of a Health Research Foundation's Enhanced Grant Review Process for New Investigators

Version: 0 Date: 08 Feb 2017

Reviewer: Kathryn Graham

Reviewer's report:

I commend the authors in their work on evaluating the ROI of their new investigators program, more work in this area is needed in contributing to the evidence base of what is working, not working and under what conditions.

Given that the focus of the paper is on the return on investment of one of Manitoba's medical services foundation programs, I would recommend that they include a reference to the Canadian Academy Health Sciences Foundation report (2009) that recommends a preferred framework and indicators for assessing the ROI or impact of health research investments. This is used widely by federal and provincial funders in Canada.

In terms of choosing the indicators of h-index, tri-council follow on funding etc, I would be more explicit in terms of why they were chosen and what they are indicating (e.g. research quality, productivity etc). Given the controversy around the use of the h-index, I would recommend more rationale on why that was chosen over and above other bibliometric indicators recommended in the CAHS report 2009. It would also be good to understand the profile information of the successful versus unsuccessful applicants (e.g. age, gender etc.) in order to establish that results were achieved due to the enhanced processes rather than differences between successful and unsuccessful applications.

Given that the purpose of the evaluation was to investigate whether the grant selection processes contributed to achieving results, I would recommend that the authors make reference to measurement issues of attribution versus contribution as well as predictive validity. Are there similar evaluations in the literature (e.g. CIHR evaluations) that they could reference. In addition, to finding literature that uses similar or different ROI calculation. I would also acknowledge use of the term "economic return on investment" as typical methods include cost
benefit analysis, cost utilization analysis, cost effective analysis and carried out by a health economist.

On a minor note I would recommend including the standard deviation for the average funding amounts on page 13.

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